

## NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :  
 :  
THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE: NTSB Accident No.  
COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001  
OCTOBER 1, 2015 :  
 :  
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: OSC [REDACTED]

Tuesday,  
October 13, 2015

USCG Seventh District Command Center  
Miami, Florida

## BEFORE:

JON FURUKAWA, NTSB  
DENNIS BRYSON, ABS  
PATTY FINSTERBUSCH, TOTE Services  
PAUL WEBB, U.S. Coast Guard

## PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE INTERVIEWEE:

CDR [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard JAG Corps

This transcript was produced from audio  
provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR  
OSC [REDACTED]

TAKEN ON  
October 13, 2015

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If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEEDED.

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Initials

[REDACTED]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person providing the above information

[REDACTED]  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person providing the above information

November 08, 2015

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (6:08 p.m.)

3 MR. FURUKAWA: It is now, it's Tuesday the  
4 13th of October, 2015. It is, the time is 18:08. And  
5 we're here at District Seven, U.S. Coast Guard District  
6 7 Miami's Command Center. And we're to interview  
7 Operations Specialist Chief [REDACTED] who is a  
8 Command Duty Officer. And right now we'll just go  
9 around and for the transcriber to say our names and who  
10 we work for. This is John Furukawa with the NTSB.

11 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patricia Finsterbusch,  
12 TOTE Services.

13 MR. BRYSON: Dennis Bryson, American Bureau  
14 of Shipping.

15 MR. WEBB: Paul Webb, U.S. Coast Guard.

16 CDR. [REDACTED] Commander [REDACTED] C.G. JAG,  
17 Chief [REDACTED] representative.

18 OSC [REDACTED] Chief [REDACTED] Command Duty Officer,  
19 Coast Guard Seventh District.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And Chief, can you go  
21 ahead and explain your relationship to this accident,  
22 what days you were standing Command Duty Officer?

23 OSC [REDACTED] I was Command Duty Officer on  
24 Thursday, the 1st of October. That was the day that we  
25 got the initial report from our land area command

1 center that the vessel El Faro had set off an Inmarsat  
2 sea distress and their SSAS alert system.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And that watch was  
4 from what time to what time?

5 OSC [REDACTED] It was 06:00 in the morning to  
6 18:00 that evening.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And what time did you  
8 get to work that morning?

9 OSC [REDACTED] I believe I got there about  
10 05:45.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: And what happens after that,  
12 5:45? What time do you go to muster or do you start  
13 your turnover?

14 OSC [REDACTED] At 06:00 we muster around our  
15 briefing table in the command center and we begin our  
16 pass down from watch to watch.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And who did you take  
18 over the watch from?

19 OSC [REDACTED] I don't recall.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

21 OSC [REDACTED] I'd have to go back and look.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And about how long  
23 does the pass down take?

24 OSC [REDACTED] Depends on the current  
25 operations. It can be anywhere from about 15 minutes

1 to 45 minutes sometimes.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Do you remember how busy it  
3 was for that turnover?

4 OSC [REDACTED] I don't recall it being anything  
5 out of the ordinary.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

7 MR. WEBB: What's the ordinary for you?  
8 This is Paul Webb asking that question.

9 OSC [REDACTED] Maybe just a few search and  
10 rescue cases, minor cases. And maybe a few law  
11 enforcement cases.

12 MR. BRYSON: Dennis Bryson. So when you do  
13 the pass down, is this done collectively, the whole  
14 watch section together?

15 OSC [REDACTED] Yes it is.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: So when the CDO's are talking  
17 -- it's John Furukawa, NTSB. The CDO's and the OU's  
18 are all kind of, you're not man for man turnovers.  
19 You're kind of in a --

20 OSC [REDACTED] No. We are all around the table  
21 and each person takes turn discussing.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So the watch is  
23 briefing the oncoming watch, not just person to person.  
24 It's team to team.

25 OSC [REDACTED] Correct.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Let's see. Let me  
2 also go over, how are old are you Chief?

3 OSC [REDACTED] Thirty four.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Thirty four. Is it okay if I  
5 just call you [REDACTED]

6 OSC [REDACTED] That's fine.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. You're 34 years old.  
8 And how many years have you been in the Coast Guard?

9 OSC [REDACTED] Over 15.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: And can you tell me about  
11 those 15, your experience in those 15 years in the  
12 Coast Guard?

13 OSC [REDACTED] Are you looking for like what  
14 particular units I've served at?

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Right. Any of the types of  
16 units.

17 OSC [REDACTED] Types of units? I was stationed  
18 on a 210 foot Coast Guard cutter, was my first unit.  
19 My second unit I worked at Group New Orleans as a  
20 Communications Watch Stander. After that, I worked at  
21 a Vessel Traffic Center in Morgan City, Louisiana. I  
22 then worked at Sector Miami as an Operations Unit and  
23 Command Duty Officer. And then I worked at Sector San  
24 Juan as a Command Duty Officer and Communications Chief  
25 and then here.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. How long have you been  
2 at District Seven?

3 OSC [REDACTED] I reported in June of 2014.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: So about a year. And how  
5 long were you at Sector San Juan?

6 OSC [REDACTED] I was there for two years.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Sector Miami?

8 OSC [REDACTED] Four years.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: And that was more of a law  
10 enforcement, Sector Miami?

11 OSC [REDACTED] No it's one of our subordinate  
12 units, one of the District's subordinate units.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

14 OSC [REDACTED] They would do both search and  
15 rescue and law enforcement.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. VTS Morgan City?

17 OSC [REDACTED] Three years.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: And Group New Orleans?

19 OSC [REDACTED] Four years.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: And the cutter?

21 OSC [REDACTED] Year and a half.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: And what cutter was that?

23 OSC [REDACTED] Coast Guard Cutter Courageous.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: Courageous. And that a  
25 medium endurance?

1 OSC [REDACTED] Yes.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: And you were there as an OS?

3 OSC [REDACTED] Telecommunications Specialist,  
4 TC.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. All right. And let's  
6 see, so you showed up to work at, you reported for work  
7 at 5:45. You did your 06:00 pass down as a team. And  
8 why don't you go ahead and go on into, you know, the  
9 watch and when you first heard about the El Faro.

10 OSC [REDACTED] Okay. We received a phone call I  
11 believe. I did not take the phone call but my SAR OU  
12 took the phone call from our LANTAREA command center,  
13 letting us know that an Inmarsat sea distress alert for  
14 the vessel El Faro, they were going to forward it to us  
15 in email, into our inbox. And they asked us to take  
16 SMC based on the position, being in our search and  
17 rescue region.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: And that's a formal, SMC is a  
19 --

20 OSC [REDACTED] SAR Mission Coordinator.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. That's a request to  
22 take it over?

23 OSC [REDACTED] Correct. SAR Mission Coordinator  
24 is basically, you know, what unit is actually  
25 processing, well you know, coordinating the case.



1 Sometimes called taking the lead on the case. Doing  
2 the planning portion, things like that, investigating  
3 portion.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

5 MR. [REDACTED] And let me step in a little bit  
6 on that. This is Paul [REDACTED] When you have a situation  
7 like that where you get an Inmarsat sea alert, it goes  
8 to area. Okay. SAR Mission Coordinator which  
9 eventually ends being assigned to a person, at the very  
10 beginning it's really assigned to first RCC.

11 And the term first RCC which is in the IM  
12 SAR manual and in the Coast Guard Addendum basically  
13 means whoever gets the initial report is first RCC. In  
14 other words, they take that initial responsibility. So  
15 that's what LANTAREA had. And then by passing it to  
16 the Chief and requesting that D7 takes it, basically  
17 because it's in D7's SAR region, then he basically  
18 takes the SMC responsibility.

19 And then the assignment through the brief  
20 basically to his Captain, makes his Captain SMC which  
21 is a Coast Guard policy to have SMC outside the command  
22 center.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: To have it outside the  
24 command center. Okay. An Inmarsat sea distress.  
25 Okay. And continue please.

1                   OSC [REDACTED] We received the email. We  
2 started looking into, plotting the position, noticed  
3 its location on the eastern side of the Bahamas.  
4 Shortly thereafter, we did received a 406 megahertz  
5 EPIRB alert registered to the same vessel.

6                   In the email received from our LANTAREA  
7 command center, I don't recall who had spoken with, I  
8 believe they called it the Company Security Officer.  
9 But the email had stated that they had spoken with the  
10 ship, that there was a hatch open, I don't know why.  
11 And that water had come inside the hatch and there was  
12 a list at about 15 degrees.

13                  I believe the email said from the ship, that  
14 we're not in risk of sinking. They were in current,  
15 they currently were de-watering the vessel or  
16 attempting to de-water the vessel. The hatch had been  
17 secured or wherever the water was coming in had been  
18 secured. And that's what I knew at the time.

19                  MR. FURUKAWA: Go on please.

20                  OSC [REDACTED] So we were provided, we asked the  
21 Security Officer -- I believe my OU asked the Security  
22 Officer to, you know, try to maybe get some more  
23 information from the ship. We were provided the, I  
24 believe the sat phone number for the ship as well. We  
25 also made attempts to contact the ship. We were

1       unsuccessful.

2                   MR. FURUKAWA:   Anybody want to ask any  
3       questions on this?

4                   MR. BRYSON:   Yes.   As far as the emergency  
5       phase, at what point do you, yourself, did you assign  
6       the emergency phase?   At least as your own feeling,  
7       even before you talked with your OU.   At what point did  
8       you feel that this was an uncertainty or alert or  
9       distress?

10                   OSC   ██████████   Well with the initial report.   I  
11       mean, you had the two systems onboard that were set off  
12       from the ship.   That alone meant that someone onboard  
13       had some type of concern.   I think our thoughts, our  
14       concern at the time was maybe lowered a little bit by  
15       the fact that, according to what we knew, the Security  
16       Officer had just spoken with the ship.

17                   And we knew their current condition which  
18       was the 15 degree list, the water that they had taken  
19       on and that was now, the hatch was secured.   And the  
20       report that they were not in danger of sinking.   We did  
21       know about the hurricane in the vicinity and that, you  
22       know, was also current.

23                   So I think at the moment, we were in more of  
24       the alert phase based on the report that we received  
25       from, I guess from the Security Officer from the

1 Captain that it sounded like everything was kind of  
2 under control at the moment.

3 MR. BRYSON: And that 406, when you got  
4 that, did that change your perception?

5 OSC [REDACTED] The 406 came, if I recall  
6 correctly, shortly after. As you may be aware,  
7 sometimes there's a delay in the SAT sat system with  
8 406 megahertz EPIRBS. I do know the first alert did  
9 not provide a location. I believe it was registered on  
10 a GEO satellite which cannot provide positions.

11 And so, I don't know if, when they set the  
12 other two alarms off, the Inmarsat C and the security  
13 alarm, I do not know if they also set the EPIRB at the  
14 same moment. And maybe it just, there was a delay in  
15 getting to us or if it had indeed been set off later  
16 than the other two.

17 MR. BRYSON: Did that change your, from  
18 alert to distress at that point?

19 OSC [REDACTED] I think that's when our talks to  
20 move it possibly towards distress kind of started. Our  
21 main concern at the moment was getting hold of the  
22 ship. Multiple attempts on, you know, to the satellite  
23 phone were done from our unit. But we didn't, you  
24 know, all we had to go by is what we were provided from  
25 the ship's Security Officer and the alerts that we had.

1                   So when we do have those alerts, you do want  
2 to know why. And you do, you know, with the EPIRB, you  
3 do go into distress usually. So my first thought was  
4 to, well we need to get something. We need a way to  
5 communicate with the ship.

6                   In order to do that in its location, an  
7 aircraft usually is the quickest. So we looked at  
8 that, about getting an aircraft launched to at least  
9 try to establish communications. We analyzed the storm  
10 and our capabilities from our aircraft and our crews.  
11 At that moment, it was not feasible due to the current  
12 weather conditions.

13                  MR. WEBB: It's Paul Webb. So what other  
14 actions did you take to try to communicate?

15                  OSC [REDACTED] So trying to, we attempted still  
16 throughout the day to contact the ship via their  
17 satellite phone, all with negative results. I did know  
18 that, you know, with the hurricane being right next to  
19 the last known positions, that there are hurricane  
20 hunter aircraft that do go out from the Air Force.

21                  I was able to contact the National Weather  
22 Service here in Miami who ultimately led me to a phone  
23 number for a Public Affairs Officer at Keesler Air  
24 Force Base in Mississippi where the hurricane hunter  
25 aircraft were launched from. Through a couple, being

1 passed around for a couple persons, I was able to talk  
2 to someone at one of their operations center, if that's  
3 what they call it, who contacted the aircraft for me  
4 via, I guess, the satellite phone on the aircraft and  
5 explained our situation.

6 I had already previously explained to their  
7 watch stander that there is a ship near the storm and  
8 gave him the last known position that we knew at the  
9 time. And asked if he does fly in that area or if he  
10 can fly in that area to make some call outs on a VHF  
11 channel 16 in hopes that they could establish some  
12 communications and give us an update on their current  
13 situation.

14 MR. WEBB: And you don't know if they had  
15 radar capability that could see --

16 OSC [REDACTED] I am unaware of their complete  
17 capability.

18 MR. WEBB: All right.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Do you now what squadron that  
20 was?

21 OSC [REDACTED] I don't recall the number.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Will that be in the  
23 SAR report?

24 MR. WEBB: Probably they have that in the  
25 MISLE.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

2 MR. BRYSON: Did the hurricane hunters, did  
3 they report back to you whether or not they were  
4 successful?

5 OSC [REDACTED] They called us actually on the  
6 phone from the aircraft while they were over the storm.  
7 They did attempt to fly, according to what they've told  
8 us, in the vicinity of the last known position, had  
9 made call outs. Negative results.

10 My OU watch stander was able to get hold of,  
11 I don't recall at the moment how he did it, a vessel  
12 near the east side of the Bahamas. I don't recall the  
13 name. That vessel I believe, I don't recall the exact  
14 distance, but they willingly accepted to make call outs  
15 as well for us for the vessel. However, they were not  
16 able due to the weather conditions to proceed in the  
17 direction of the last known position themselves to  
18 assist in the search.

19 The hurricane hunter aircraft did hear the  
20 call outs from that vessel. But again, nothing heard  
21 from the El Faro.

22 MR. BRYSON: What is the timeframe that this  
23 is going on?

24 OSC [REDACTED] Throughout the day. I really, I  
25 don't recall the exact times.

1 MR. BRYSON: What was the name of that  
2 vessel? The Evergreen?

3 MR. WEBB: Emerald Express.

4 MR. BRYSON: Emerald. Okay. Did the  
5 hurricane hunter, did they pass any weather,  
6 (inaudible) maybe give you a better idea of what it was  
7 like near the eye?

8 OSC [REDACTED] I don't recall them passing the  
9 information.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: If they did, would that be in  
11 the MISLE?

12 OSC [REDACTED] It would if they did. I don't  
13 believe they had passed it though. At least in that,  
14 the first hurricane hunter.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

16 MR. BRYSON: That would be some good data to  
17 have.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Yes.

19 MR. BRYSON: Knowing exactly what the  
20 weather was when they flew over.

21 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: For now no questions.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: The first hurricane hunter  
23 was already airborne.

24 OSC [REDACTED] Correct.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So do you know about



1 when they would start making call outs?

2 OSC [REDACTED] I'd have to reference the MISLE  
3 case.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Can you hear it form  
5 here, you know, the VHF channel 16 when they're  
6 broadcasting?

7 OSC [REDACTED] We don't have radios here in this  
8 building, VHF radios.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Right.

10 OSC [REDACTED] Our local sector would have  
11 those. But that would normally be outside of VHF range  
12 from here.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: So even that high up, at  
14 10,000 feet. Okay. And the OU watch stander was Petty  
15 Officer [REDACTED] (phonetic)?

16 OSC [REDACTED] Correct, [REDACTED]

17 MR. FURUKAWA: [REDACTED]

18 OSC [REDACTED] Yes.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: When the watch center was  
20 talking to Mr. Lawrence, the company's Security  
21 Officer, that was [REDACTED] that was talking to them.  
22 Were you in on the phone call?

23 OSC [REDACTED] I don't recall being in on that  
24 phone call, no.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Did anybody tell them to have

1 the ship anchor?

2 OSC [REDACTED] Tell the ship or tell the  
3 Security Officer?

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Right or tell the Security  
5 Officer to have the ship anchor.

6 OSC [REDACTED] I do not know.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

8 OSC [REDACTED] I know we did not talk to the  
9 ship.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Right. The Security Officer.

11 OSC [REDACTED] I did not.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Anybody else for the  
13 first day? Okay.

14 MR. BRYSON: One more question. Did you,  
15 you didn't expand the watch during your first watch?  
16 Did you call in more watch standers during your first  
17 watch?

18 OSC [REDACTED] No.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Do you know when it got  
20 expanded?

21 OSC [REDACTED] I do not.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

23 MR. WEBB: Lawrence said that he had the  
24 tape of the phone call or the message that was left on  
25 his phone. Did you guys hear that? Did they repeat

1 that back in for the ship's agent? He had a recording  
2 off his phone from the Captain that kind of described  
3 the situation.

4 OSC [REDACTED] I never heard it.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: And do you know what time,  
6 about what time you left work that evening?

7 OSC [REDACTED] I don't know the exact time.  
8 Approximate probably between 18:30, 18:45.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And let's see, earlier  
10 Paul asked you about when to go from the alert -- was  
11 there an official going from alert phase to a distress  
12 phase?

13 OSC [REDACTED] There usually is. I'd have to go  
14 back with my SMC and discuss exactly when he decided to  
15 make the shift.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So Captain would have  
17 that.

18 OSC [REDACTED] Correct.

19 MR. WEBB: I know in MISLE, there is a  
20 written statement in there that they were recognizing  
21 it as a distress.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

23 MR. WEBB: I saw that in the MISLE.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So anything else for  
25 the first day? How about let's move to the second day.

1 I believe it was Saturday the 3rd of October. You sat  
2 Command Duty Officer from 06:00 to 18:00. Can you go  
3 ahead and tell us about that day?

4 OSC [REDACTED] Started off as far as watch  
5 relief goes, the same. At that point, they had brought  
6 in, I believe extra, you know, one extra. There was an  
7 extra search and rescue watch stander and they had set  
8 up an incident management team to handle a little bit  
9 of extra workload.

10 We basically did the, we did a pass down.  
11 We you know, talked about what aircraft were out there,  
12 what they had done the night before, where we currently  
13 were, any new updates with anything. We discussed what  
14 the current future plans were, that the night watch had  
15 set up, you know, through SAR ops and what other  
16 agencies were going to be assisting us.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

18 OSC [REDACTED] And completed our watch relief.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And can you tell us  
20 about that? Or any questions about the watch relief?

21 MR. BRYSON: Was Petty Officer [REDACTED] was  
22 he your watch stander again?

23 OSC [REDACTED] No. I had Petty Officer [REDACTED]  
24 (phonetic) was. He was the SAR OU that was handling  
25 the El Faro, the majority of the El Faro case.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: The majority or was he  
2 handling all of it?

3 OSC [REDACTED] Yes. I mean when I saw majority,  
4 I mean his phones ring and, you know, people answer if  
5 he's on another line. But yes, he was the main watch  
6 stander that I had designated to handle the search  
7 planning for this particular case.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Go ahead and go on  
9 with the rest of the watch and tell us about the watch.

10 OSC [REDACTED] For the most part, that watch was  
11 just SAR planning as far as asset management and using  
12 our SAR ops program to the best of its ability to  
13 position aircraft and to create search patterns for  
14 those aircraft to search. Making sure we de-conflicted  
15 with the aircraft as far as air space goes and times.  
16 And just creating future planning for the next watch.

17 There was, later in the day, I believe it  
18 was sometime in the afternoon, there was the report, I  
19 believe of a life ring. I think I believe, the initial  
20 report, if I recall correctly, was three life rings and  
21 a life jacket but I'd have to reference the case.

22 At that time, it was one of the fixed wing  
23 aircraft I believe that brought the report in to us.  
24 My initial thought was to get, since we did not have  
25 surface assets yet in the search area, was to get one

1 of the 60 Jayhawks that can deploy a rescue swimmer to  
2 that position to look at one of the life rings to  
3 determine if it did come from the El Faro.

4 I believe I did talk to that day, I'm  
5 forgetting his name but the one guy from TOTE that I  
6 was speaking with at the incident command post. John -  
7 -

8 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: John Lawrence.

9 OSC [REDACTED] John Lawrence. That's what he  
10 said a minute ago. I spoke with him. I believe I  
11 asked him, you know, if this is from the El Faro, will  
12 it be stenciled, you know. And he said, he assured me  
13 that, you know, it would be stenciled. So that way I  
14 knew that if I do find this, I can confirm.

15 Due to the storm in the area, there could be  
16 just debris that's unrelated. But this was the first  
17 thing we had found. It is a life ring. You know  
18 that's used in sometimes distress purposes. So I  
19 focused at least the 60 and the air asset to search  
20 that area.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And did the 60, did  
22 they go and pick up the life ring or the life jacket?

23 OSC [REDACTED] When I got off watch that day,  
24 they had not gotten on scene I don't believe, to do  
25 that yet.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Were they on their way?

2 OSC [REDACTED] They were on their way. I want  
3 to say they were. Or we were at least in a discussion  
4 of getting them to that life ring because we wanted to  
5 check and see if it was from the El Faro. And that  
6 would allow to get, maybe a more, a better data, more  
7 better search area to look for survivors.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So weather had  
9 improved on the second watch you had on the 3rd? That  
10 the helos could go to the water without getting blown  
11 around by the wind?

12 OSC [REDACTED] I believe there were certain  
13 areas that they still couldn't but I would have to go  
14 back and look at the case to see exactly what areas  
15 that was. But I know our talks before I left watch  
16 that day was to get the helo, you know, there because  
17 we didn't have a surface, you know, ship or anything  
18 that could do that for us yet.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So that would have  
20 been on the following watch, if they had gone to  
21 retrieve the life rings. And do you know who relieved  
22 you that day?

23 OSC [REDACTED] I'd have to go back and look at  
24 the schedule. I don't want to say the wrong person.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. But that was getting

1 to be, they discovered it, you said late afternoon so  
2 towards the end of the watch.

3 OSC [REDACTED] I believe it was after lunch at  
4 least.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: After lunch. Okay.

6 MR. [REDACTED] This is kind of out of the box  
7 thing a little bit. But was there any discussion when  
8 you guys were doing search plan after you found the  
9 life ring to backdrift it?

10 OSC [REDACTED] There may. I don't think I was  
11 part of that. Sometimes there are discussions that  
12 take place between the OU watch stander and the SMC  
13 directly as far as just thoughts, you know. But I  
14 didn't particularly have that discussion that day.

15 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch, TOTE  
16 Services. I was in our SAR so I have a couple of  
17 different times and stuff. But one of the first things  
18 that we actually, we were told was found was an oil  
19 tank that -- do you remember that?

20 OSC [REDACTED] I do remember that now. Yes. It  
21 was reported to be some type of tank or drum. I  
22 believe the aircraft, it was the Navy P-8 that located  
23 that. It was, I think they reported it to be maybe 50  
24 feet long. They were able to take a photograph and  
25 send it to us. It was kind of round. It had a ladder



1 coming off the back.

2 We did go back and forth -- the original  
3 photo was sent by the Navy. It was classified based on  
4 their systems. I went back and forth with trying to  
5 work with one of the, I believe it was a Navy Chief, I  
6 don't recall his name, in Jacksonville where their  
7 operations for their P-8's are to get that  
8 declassified.

9 They were working their path to get that  
10 done. And then eventually, we did get the pictures  
11 declassified. Because our hopes and ultimate goal all  
12 along was to get that to the command post in  
13 Jacksonville for TOTE to have them take a look at it to  
14 see if this did indeed come, look like something that  
15 may have come from the El Faro. And we also showed it  
16 to the representatives that were here.

17 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: That's what I was  
18 wondering because they carry containers that look like  
19 tanks.

20 OSC [REDACTED] Right.

21 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Or you know, and that's  
22 probably what that was.

23 OSC [REDACTED] Right. Yes. Once it was  
24 declassified and we were able to show it to the  
25 representatives that were physically here at the

1 building, I do recall they were unsure completely if it  
2 was or was not from the El Faro.

3 MR. WEBB: Do you remember what color the  
4 tanks were?

5 OSC [REDACTED] The photo I had I believe is  
6 black and white from their sensor package. I don't  
7 believe there was color to it so I don't know.

8 MR. WEBB: Okay. Was it light colored or  
9 dark colored in the black and white photo?

10 OSC [REDACTED] I believe it appeared white but  
11 sometimes with the black and white, it can be  
12 different.

13 MR. WEBB: So pure white?

14 OSC [REDACTED] Or a light color.

15 MR. WEBB: Okay. And Pat, those are the  
16 tanks that are used to carry corn syrup to Puerto Rico?

17 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: God forbid it was those.  
18 Those are down in the hold.

19 MR. WEBB: Okay.

20 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: No. If you're descending  
21 oil in bulk or, you know, different things in bulk to  
22 Puerto Rico, instead of putting it in a container, it's  
23 just like having a tanker truck. We have containers  
24 that look like tanks.

25 MR. WEBB: Okay.

1 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: And that's what I think  
2 is what it probably was. My first reaction to, when it  
3 started was, is it these big tanks down in the hold?  
4 But somebody would have recognized it from TOTE and  
5 been able to say that. And that would have told us  
6 right off the bat that the ship was -- it was three  
7 life rings, a life jacket, a cooler, and some yellow  
8 lines.

9 As I recall, I guess they dropped, they did  
10 put the rescue swimmer in. It must have been later  
11 that night.

12 OSC [REDACTED] Yes it was after my watch.

13 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay. I guess one was  
14 not stenciled, one was stenciled. I wasn't sure about  
15 the third one. I think he picked two. That came from  
16 -- all right, so by this time you had two C-130s and  
17 two 860s and the P-8 I guess. Maybe a couple P-8s.  
18 The C-130 was low enough that he would be able to see  
19 that stuff at that point?

20 CDR. [REDACTED] Did you talk about the planes  
21 that were up?

22 OSC [REDACTED] I did not talk about all the  
23 planes. I mean --

24 CDR. [REDACTED] Do you agree with those numbers  
25 that she had just said?

1 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: 16:00 (inaudible). Sorry  
2 about that. So you told us that there was a P-8 and it  
3 just wrapped up and another P-8 was going to come out  
4 for a little while, come out from like 17:00 to 19:30.  
5 And there was two C-130s and two 860s.

6 OSC [REDACTED] That's what I had said that day?

7 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Yes.

8 OSC [REDACTED] Okay.

9 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: That was at 16:00. The  
10 C-130 I guess, so the C-130 -- it was clearer by then.  
11 I mean, the seas were, the storm had moved away enough  
12 by then that they were seeing water?

13 OSC [REDACTED] I know they were able to get  
14 under the clouds.

15 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay.

16 OSC [REDACTED] They were able to see water.  
17 Correct.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: And that happened sometime  
19 during your watch, where they were able go under those  
20 clouds? Or were they able to do before you started  
21 watch on that, on the 3rd?

22 OSC [REDACTED] I want to believe the C-130s  
23 could. The Navy P-8 definitely, that's how they were  
24 able to take the photo. If the cloud level would have  
25 still been there, they wouldn't have been able to take

1       that photo through a cloud.

2                   MR. FURUKAWA:  On that watch, was the life  
3       boat discovered during that watch or the --

4                   OSC [REDACTED]  No, not on my watch.

5                   MR. FURUKAWA:  Was that before or after?

6                   OSC [REDACTED]  I believe that was after.

7                   MR. FURUKAWA:  Okay.  The body in the --

8                   OSC [REDACTED]  That was after.

9                   MR. FURUKAWA:  -- the Gumby suit?  After?  
10       Okay.

11                   MR. BRYSON:  Any other significant things on  
12       that third watch?

13                   OSC [REDACTED]  The second.

14                   MR. BRYSON:  You said it was on the 3rd.

15                   MR. FURUKAWA:  The second watch on the 3rd  
16       day.

17                   OSC [REDACTED]  Correct.  No.  I left with  
18       knowing that the, you know, they had spotted life rings  
19       but we didn't know if it was from the El Faro.  Still  
20       hadn't heard a conclusive anything from the company or  
21       for anyone that was familiar with the vessel as far as  
22       the tank goes, if it had for sure been from the El  
23       Faro.

24                   And that's how we passed the watch down.  
25       Just basically our normal pass down as we would with

1 any search and rescue case, discussing what aircraft  
2 were up at the time and what the future plans were  
3 with, you know, the planning for the aircrafts that  
4 night.

5 MR. BRYSON: So throughout the second watch,  
6 you're still trying to periodically make communication  
7 with the vessel?

8 OSC [REDACTED] I was not. I would have to ask  
9 my SAR watch stander if he was. I believe he, I want  
10 to say he attempted but I would have to ask him.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: And that was by Inmarsat?

12 OSC [REDACTED] The satellite phone that we were  
13 provided from the company.

14 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch. So  
15 were you still doing, or did you do another scatter  
16 plot on the 3rd then? So were you still trying to, you  
17 know, figure out the drift plans and stuff? Was that  
18 being done? I mean, does that get done every day or is  
19 it just --

20 OSC [REDACTED] Usually we'll, a re-drift will  
21 occur at least every 12 hours. Many times that will  
22 happen earlier than that but there's many factors. It  
23 depends on which, how many assets you have up, you  
24 know, how long they're searching for, their  
25 capabilities. I mean, it could be, sometimes you can

1 do a re-drift every four hours. But they vary.

2 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: When you first started,  
3 you were looking for a ship. By this time were you,  
4 you were making them smaller objects, looking like  
5 boats, life --

6 OSC [REDACTED] Correct. When I was on, we were  
7 past that. I believe they had a life raft, a life  
8 boat, and they still had the ship listed as a search  
9 object.

10 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Okay.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: When you started your watch  
12 and you ended your watch?

13 OSC [REDACTED] Correct. It was like that when  
14 we came on that morning.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

16 MR. WEBB: So it was still a search and  
17 rescue mission?

18 OSC [REDACTED] Yes.

19 MR. FURUKAWA: Anything else Patty? No?  
20 Anything else Dennis? So nothing else for the rest of  
21 the interview? Time to wind down. Okay. As we're  
22 closing off the interview, is there anything you'd like  
23 to add or change?

24 OSC [REDACTED] No.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Are there any

1 questions that we should have asked you but didn't?

2 OSC [REDACTED] No.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. With that being said,  
4 it's 18:51 and we're ending the interview with OSC

5 [REDACTED]  
6 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went  
7 off the record at 6:51 p.m.)  
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<p><b>A</b></p> <p><b>ability</b> 20:12</p> <p><b>able</b> 12:21 13:1 14:10 14:16 23:24 24:24 26:5,18 27:13,16,19 27:20,24,25</p> <p><b>above-entitled</b> 31:6</p> <p><b>ABS</b> 1:17</p> <p><b>accepted</b> 14:14</p> <p><b>accident</b> 1:4 2:21</p> <p><b>actions</b> 12:14</p> <p><b>add</b> 30:23</p> <p><b>Addendum</b> 8:12</p> <p><b>Affairs</b> 12:23</p> <p><b>afternoon</b> 20:18 23:1</p> <p><b>agencies</b> 19:16</p> <p><b>agent</b> 18:1</p> <p><b>ago</b> 21:10</p> <p><b>agree</b> 26:24</p> <p><b>ahead</b> 2:21 7:8 19:3 20:8</p> <p><b>air</b> 12:20,23 20:15 21:19</p> <p><b>airborne</b> 15:23</p> <p><b>aircraft</b> 12:7,8,10,20,25 13:3,4 14:6,19 19:11 20:13,14,15,23 23:22 29:1</p> <p><b>aircrafts</b> 29:3</p> <p><b>alarm</b> 11:13</p> <p><b>alarms</b> 11:12</p> <p><b>alert</b> 3:2 7:13 8:7 9:5 10:8,24 11:8,18 18:10 18:11</p> <p><b>alerts</b> 11:25 12:1</p> <p><b>allow</b> 22:6</p> <p><b>American</b> 2:13</p> <p><b>analyzed</b> 12:9</p> <p><b>anchor</b> 17:1,5</p> <p><b>answer</b> 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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: El Faro Incident  
Accident No. DCA16MM001  
Interview of [REDACTED]  
Miami, FL

DATE: 10-13-15

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